

# High Point drawing high-tech companies

*By Amy Dominello, Staff Writer  
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HIGH POINT -- A startup technology company may locate in north High Point, an area fast becoming popular for both high-technology and biotechnology companies.

QuarTek International Inc. is considering renovating a building at 4180 Piedmont Parkway, in the Piedmont Centre. To lure the company there, the city is considering providing an incentive of \$71,400 toward QuarTek's building purchase and renovation. If City Council approves the incentives, the company could become the fourth high-technology company to receive incentives from High Point in the past month.

In early March, three biotech companies announced plant expansions in north High Point and received incentives totaling \$185,435. The City Council will review QuarTek's incentive next Monday.

Loren Hill, president of the High Point Economic Development Corp., said other sites in other cities are under consideration, but would not say where.

QuarTek is headed up by Reyad Sawafta, a nuclear physicist and professor. Sawafta has served as both vice president of TransTech Pharma and as CEO of PharmaCore, which are sister companies located in the Piedmont Centre.

QuarTek would focus on nanotechnology, a broad field dealing with materials that are smaller than the width of a human hair. On such a scale, the materials exhibit different physical properties than they do on a larger scale. It has applications in fields ranging from electronics to biotechnology. While nanotechnology is an emerging technology, it's already used to make stain resistant clothes and bodies of cars stronger.

If it located in High Point, QuarTek would be one of two nanotechnology companies in the Triad, said Richard Czerw, a research scientist and lab manager of the Center of Nanotechnology at Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem.

Sawafta was traveling Wednesday and unable to comment.

But Czerw said Sawafta will be working in partnership with the university's center.

QuarTek is a privately-held company that expects to invest as much as \$4 million in state-of-the-art facilities and equipment over the next two to three years, said Hill. The company plans to initially hire 10 people -- at an average salary of \$70,000 per year -- and may hire an additional 20 employees.

With three Piedmont Centre biotech companies expanding -- TransTech Pharma, PharmaCore and MWG Biotech --economic development officials feel north High Point could become a hotbed for high-tech companies looking to leverage a strong work force, access to interstates and the airport, and proximity to such research universities as Wake Forest, UNCG and N.C. A&T.

"Northern High Point has got a real focus right now," said Gwyn Riddick, director of the Piedmont Triad office of the North Carolina Biotechnology Center. "The officials in High Point have done a good job focusing on research and development companies and attracting higher-tech companies."

Riddick said north High Point is one of four regions in the Triad drawing high tech companies. The others are in Burlington, in a planned research park between A&T and UNCG, and in the Piedmont Triad Research Park in Winston.

The large Piedmont Centre business park has proved a "comfortable" location for high-tech companies, said Larry Gildea, senior vice president of Liberty Property Trust, one of several firms operating the Piedmont Centre. Newer business parks, such as the Piedmont Centre, offer power backups and phone systems that high-technology companies need, he said.

And once one company comes in, others tend to flock in as well. "The more mass you have, the more mass you attract," said Gildea.

*Contact Amy Dominello at 883-4422, Ext. 248.*